The Black Cat

November 1908

Pap Ellswick's Minnie
$200 Prize
Charles McIlvaine

The Lost Button
James Francis Dwyer

The Ghost Ship
C. A. Borden

The Fire Dutchman
Don Mark Lemon

A Hired Gallant
$125 Prize
Florence Martin Eastland

The Slot-Machine of the Storms
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The Sword of His Father
Ethel Claire Randall

The Burglar from Heaven
Jennie Martha Chenery

Zinklefoot's Find
James Francis Dwyer

Vol. XIV., No. 2. Whole No. 158.

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41-47 Pearl Street, Boston, Massachusetts
and 10 Norfolk Street, Strand, London, W. C.

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The Black Cat

A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

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Vol. XIV., No. 2. Whole No., 158. NOVEMBER, 1908. 10 cents a copy. $1.00 a year.

Entered at the Post-Office at Boston, Mass., as second-class matter.

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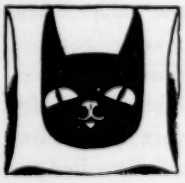
Pap Ellswick's Minnie.*

BY CHARLES McILVAINE.



NDER hemlocks, birches and laurels, under the sweep of spruce trees and white-limbed guardianship of sycamores, Blue Creek, West Virginia, pools its waters at the mouth of a giddy branch — Three-Mile.

When rain plays upon the mountains, or sun rests heavily upon snowfalls, or thundering clouds send deluges quickly into it, Three-Mile is wild; but ordinarily Three-Mile loves to loiter and ripple over its stone-ways with music and murmur. Blue Creek is compelled to capture it in all its moods, so, wisely gathers her waters into a wide, deep, brawny pool where Three-Mile at its wildest can leap and dash and tear, only to be conquered at last and settled into sober flow.

Pushed on and on from miles above, Blue Creek's waters — lazy as they are while waiting for Three-Mile — have to go somewhere. Somehow, they slip through the pool, laugh about it among the stepping stones of the ford, and then dance away, waving a happy good-bye.

Where the waters laugh, where the pool waits, is where I first saw Minnie.

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One August day I rode into the ford. My mountain nag, Bill, head down, was crossing to suit himself. Suddenly he stopped. His ears pointed straight ahead, betokening surprise. There was a child half way over the ford; not on its stepping stones, but wading alongside of them from lack of leg length to bridge their separating distances. Clad in bandless calico, her hair curly and free, with inquisitive brown eyes, chin put to one side as if afraid of splashes, a tucking up of dress above bare feet and brown knees, a coy shyness that was bewitching, she stood looking up at me.

Blue Creek waters, with impatient growl at the impediment of Bill's legs, passed under him as we waited for the little creature to go by without the danger of a ducking.

"Come ahead," she said. "I ain't afeared. I know you won't swash me."

The child's face was a marvel. It was not pretty, but there was something brave, reliant; such an implicit faith in it as she looked up at me and said: "I know you won't swash me," that I was captured.

"Certainly I will not swash you," I said. "Come on."

Even Bill turned his head with kindly look, which meant that he would not budge an inch until she was beyond his splash; and that one look put him in the motion of turning to follow her.

We watched her — Bill and I — until she reached the shallow ripples at Three-Mile's dimpled mouth; then she half turned to look back at us, batted her eyes at the dazzling glare of the mid-day sun, which left her shadowless, but lighted up every curl and cranny of her silky hair.

"Thank you, sir," she said. "Won't you turn back and eat a bite; it's noon."

There was a force in the invitation not to be withstood. Bill seemingly had anticipated it; for he had wheeled of his own accord. Involuntarily I said: "Yes, dear."

She gave me a smile that told her pleasure in my acceptance. She hitched her dress a higher tuck out of the way of the water's sport and said, "Come along."

"How far is it?" I asked.

"Jist to the cabin yander. You'll be welcome. Come 'long."

By the silent stretch of water, around a jut of mountain wall,

and in a few moments we were in front of a log cabin which the high screen of rock had hidden until now.

In front of the cabin the child stopped, looked up at me, and laying her hand fearlessly on the face of the nosing Bill, said: "Light off, stranger, an' go in. I'll take keer uv your critter."

"Light down," she said more emphatically, as I hesitated about consigning her to Bill. "Light down an' go into the cabin. I kin take keer uv your critter. I like critters. You won't tread on me notime, will you, horsey?" She gave the astonished Bill a kiss on the nose which put him past even raising his head as she laid hold of the bridle rein.

I "lighted down" as she bid me — unslung my saddle pockets, loosened the saddle girth, and, for a moment watched Bill follow her as if he were under a charm; then I went into the cabin and sat down on a chair withed into swaying discomfort and full of uncertainty.

About me was a cribbed notice to all that a bit of space had been pre-empted as an abode. It was a log cabin with one room only. There had been an effort, once upon a time, to hew the logs flat upon the inside — the axe marks were there to testify to it. There had also been an attempt to fill up the spaces between the logs with mud, but the filling had long ago yielded to frost and rain. Now the logs were as separate as when first notched at the corners and piled across each other. The fireplace contained a pile of ashes parted in the middle and curving up into the corners as if to bolster the blackened, cracked, ricketty stones of which it was built. In the centre of the pile some white-coated embers glowed under a three-legged iron baker.

Above the fireplace was a shelf, black with the smoke of many a year, upon which was heaped all the treasure and decoration of the cabin — a clock out of tick, preserves, jam, a trout line, a salmon spear with a prong wanting, a long rifle and a pair of boots with highly gilded tops, but no heels or toes connected with the legs worth mentioning. Tacked here and there by sweet locust thorns, were gaudy labels from fruit cans, squirrel tails, hawk wings, and plumes of spruce boughs. A row of mussel shells upon the floor was placed as a hypotenuse to the right angle of the cabin's corner, and within it was an indescribable collec-

tion of broken plates, shells, stones, pebbles, odd knots, chicken feathers, a rag doll and other idiosyncrasies of a child's playhouse. In another corner was a bedstead. On the stone hearth a fat kitten sat contemplating the death of the coals.

Alongside of the door lay a small pile of potatoes; from the rafters hung the remnant of a side of bacon.

While I was taking an inventory of the cabin's contents, and wondering how my little hostess of the ford was going to exercise her hospitality, she came in the doorway, undisturbed, as if the entertainment of travellers was an every-day occurrence. She reported in a business way: "Stranger, I've putted your critter to a stack uv roughness, an' he's eating; now we'll hev some dinner. Mom's not to hum; he's gone up on the rocks whar he sets. He'll come in nigh sundown an' fetch the cows. Hit's no differ; we'll hev some grub. Hit's noon."

She blew up the fire into ruddy sprightliness, went out of the cabin, and I heard her chopping at something. In a little bit she came back with an armful of wood. Soon she had a blazing fire, and turning to the amazed me, said: "Stranger, would you mind holding me up, like Mom does, to git the bacon? Mom won't be home till sundown, he won't."

I picked her up, wanting to kiss her all the while, and put her under the piece of bacon, which she took down from its wooden hook and quickly had slices of it frying in the iron baker.

"Stranger," she said gravely when the bacon was fried, "dinner is done done. Hit ain't much, but you're welcome to it. We hain't no chiney er knives an' forks like we oughter hev, so jine to an' help yourself."

That meant going into the skillet with my fingers. I was so much interested in my entertainer that I knelt by the fireplace, fished off a piece of bacon and thoroughly enjoyed the eating of it. I insisted on her joining me, but she declined. "No, I allus waits fer Mom."

"Tell me your name, please. You have not told me yet?" I asked.

"Pap Ellswick's Minnie, that's all," she answered. "I wish Mom was yere to see you. He's up on the rocks."

The opposite genders of "Mom" and "He" were irreconcil-

able, but the little witch was earnest and fascinating. The enigma was worth solving.

She told me of the cows and how the horse had mashed the drake which belonged to the lone duck squawking under the cabin, and everything else she could think of concerning the farm — as she called the patch of wilderness about us. She was sitting alongside of me on a chair as unreliable as my own. I so wanted to show my appreciation of her hospitality that I put my arm around her and was going to lift her to my knee when she quickly jumped away. "No, sir," she said indignantly. "I hain't keepin' company with no one; so jist keep your han's off me."

I confess to relief from my embarrassment when she exclaimed: "Here comes Mom! He's comin'."

Either a woman in trousers or a man in skirts was a reasonable expectation; instead, a white-haired, white-bearded, tall, gaunt, ragged man entered the cabin. It cannot be said that he was clad. His clothing epitomized the truth of the proverb: "Patch beside patch is neighborly, but patch upon patch is beggarly."

He gave the usual mountaineer's greeting: "Howdy, stranger. You're welcome. What might your name be? I reckon Minnie's taken keer uv you. She commonly does uv any one that comes our way."

Taking a seat on a box by the fireplace, he said: "Minnie, go milk. I fotched the cows. There's a storm comin'. I seed it from the rocks. I fotched 'em home arly."

The child cheerfully rose and went out. I mentally pictured the mite milking cows many times the size of herself, they all the while submitting their udders to her tiny hands.

Rousing from my revery I said, "Minnie is very small to do that sort of work. I think I will go help her."

"Don't you do it, stranger," the old man replied. "She's the coaxinest girl in the hull kentry. The cows give down their milk to her when they won't to no one else — mought be 'cause she's so leetel. She's a power uv sarvice! I finded her. Did she tell you 'bout it, stranger? How I finded her?"

"No," I answered, with an interrogating inflection. I wanted her history and knew the old man would tell me upon the slightest invitation.

"Hit wuz the fust luck I'd had for many a day — findin' her. Hit wuz seven year ago the dark uv the moon uv last April. The cows had wandered to the top uv the mountain to Bill Jeemes' clearin' to get the grass whar the sun starts it arly. Hit don't git into the hollers till late. The snow lays thar till way in May, when the spring is back'ard. I wuz bringin' 'em down the trail t'other side uv the ford. Hit wuz jist afore sunrise. The fog hangin' on Blue Creek wuz so heavy I couldn't see nothin' notime. I followed the tinklin' bell uv the leader. Jist tother side uv the ford I heerd somethin' I hadn't heerd for many a year. 'Hit beant a lamb,' I sez. 'Hit beant a painter's cub. Hit's a baby!' I sez. I kinder choked, and things in me sorter stood still. 'Hit's a baby!' I sez. 'Throwed away,' for I heerd no woman comfortin' it, nothin' but the drappin' uv the water from the limbs. I mind hopin' thar wuz no mother for it, for I wuz hungerin' for children. Mine was all gone; gone — married an' left me. An' my wife had been dead this twenty year. I wuz hungerin' for a baby. Hit squalled agin. 'Sartin, that's a baby,' I sez. 'A mile from any cabin — afore sun up — somethin's wrong.' I disremembered the cows an' I took inter the bushes — followin' the sound. Thar I found it — red in the face an' yellin' — in a bundle uv straw, wrapped up in an old calico dress tied round with a plough line. Some gal had throwed it away. I took it in my arms an' stuck it under my coat — kinder warmin' it, kinder hidin' it, for it wuz mine. I'd finded it. I didn't want no one to see it. I wuz tickled ez a cat with kittens. I carried it home an' fed it milk with a bit uv rag on a sasser. That wuz Minnie. I nussed her an' keered fer her. She's allers called me Mom. She's never knowed no other Mom. I kep' her hid for a smart while, fearin' folks 'ud be tryin' to find out whose she wuz. I never tried. She's been a power uv comfort to me — a power! An' sarvice? She's wuth more than a hull houseful for housekeepin'. People roun' yere calls her ole Pap Ellswick's Minnie. I see she spread dinner for you, stranger. She's right handy at cookin'. A storm's comin'. Hit's comin' from the upper waters uv Blue Creek. Thar'll be a tide an' it bilen, in half an hour. I reckon Minnie's to the spring with the milk. Hit's time she wuz in."

He walked to the door and called her. The wind tripped on the mountain top and fell with a crash into the narrow valley. The air was full of flying leaves. The dark shadow of the storm came almost instantly, lightning streaked from the clouds, thunder shook the earth and the rain dashed in slanting streams. The rocky steeps spouted the water into Blue Creek. It rose rapidly, and rising, bent ferns, alders, low swaying branches, before it.

"Ho, Minnie!" the old man called. "I do b'lieve she's gone to tie up the raft at the upper crossin'," he said anxiously. "She never forgits nothin'. She's afeared it'll git away."

"Heavens, Man, she will be blown away or drowned. I will go after her!" I exclaimed anxiously.

"Don't mind her, stranger. She's been out in wuss storms ner this. She's a regular duck in the water. The tide couldn't drown her no more than a musrat."

Hatless I plunged into the drive, and, shoulder to the wind, forced myself in the direction the old man had pointed. The well-beaten trail guided me to the crossing. The creek boiled angrily. On the opposite side Minnie, with a slender push-pole, held the raft to the shore. A young, gaudily dressed woman clung to a sapling; hair, ribbon, skirts streaming to the wind, and timidly made her way on to the unstable float of drift logs wedged together.

"Come on," the child urged, her voice thin and shrill above the bass of the tumult. "Don't be afeared. I'll git you over. Sit down an' you won't fall off. The ole raft wabbles an' tilts. Sit down, I tell you. I'll do the polin'."

The woman loosened her hold on the sapling and crouched upon the raft. Minnie lifted the push-pole from its bracing position.

"Don't try to cross," I shouted. "Stop." The child looked at me and laughed. The raft swung. The torrent caught it. She dexterously turned the jagged prow to the current and set the craft at an angle to it, that the stream's force might drive it across. The crouching woman stared at her. In the earnestness of her gaze she seemed unmindful of the wildness and danger. Suddenly she rose to her knees and clasped Minnie to her bosom. The child clung to her pole. The raft, unmanaged, drifted with the dashing water.

I tore after it along the bank, through briars and brush, shouting like a demon, as might the Wild Huntsman with phantom prey in sight. I saw the raft with its helpless burden swing and toss around the mountain jut. As it disappeared the two faces were side by side. In the distance they were alike. The truth flashed upon me — a Magdalene and her child.

On I sped, the sweep of the storm aiding me. The race was unequal. Below the jut the stream was visible until it circled in its channel beyond Three-Mile; its tossing surface was bare. The raft had disappeared. The ford was in sight. There the weaker current of Three-Mile was backed into a swirling pool by the larger stream, now a fathom deep over the stepping stones. As I ran and watched for a sign of life, I saw something swimming in the swirl. Before I could get to her I saw that it was Minnie. She swam to the bank and clambered from the water. She did not pause, she did not look back. Her step was determined, her face was hard, her eyes glittered, her dress, half torn from her, dragged in the mud. The rain pelted, the wind halted her. I reached to take her in my arms. She drew herself up with a dignity that stopped me. "Let me be, stranger. I'm going to my Mom. That woman said she wuz my mother. She cried an' tried to make much uv me. I axed her if she wuz the woman that chucked me in the bushes, an' she 'llowed she wuz. I jerked myself from her an' tore my dress. I throwed her the push-pole an' I sez: 'You kin hev it, an' the raft, but you can't have me. You throwed me away an' left me.' I jumped into the creek an' swum for the swirl. I'm goin' to my Mom. He's my Mom. He's keered for me."

She left me. Later, I saw her asleep in the old man's arms. He was tenderly curling her wet hair upon his knotty forefinger.

The Lost Button.*

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER.

SOMEBODY has defined crime as "the momentary victory of an hereditary craving over common sense." In the case of the two Gilfillans, the same craving manifested itself in each man at the same moment. This was peculiar. The desire came upon each of the brothers to possess two blood horses belonging to a neighbor, and common sense was routed in the struggle to suppress the craving.

The Gilfillans got the horses, and, incidentally, the sheriff got the Gilfillans. A stern judge conducted the judicial inquiry, and, unable to see that the brothers were victims of a craving, handed down from a horse-loving ancestor, he sent them to Enlota penitentiary for seven years.

This was unfortunate. The younger Gilfillan was consumptive, and Enlota's "Little Hell" was not an ideal health resort. Three months after sentence the boy was sent to the jail hospital, and became firmly imbued with the feeling that he would not recover his health. The sentence had smashed up the last ounce of vitality that was holding the fort against the disease, and the prisoner was sinking rapidly.

Now, prisoners in jail hospital receive no tobacco. Whether the prison medico believes that the brand supplied to the numbered inmates is a compound that can only be safely consumed by the physically strong is not known, but the weekly supply allowed to a prisoner on the "works" is immediately cut off if he is taken to the hospital. The dearth of tobacco affected the consumptive Gilfillan. He craved a "chew," and in distress he acquainted the brother of his craving by what is in jail parlance known as a "stiff." With a pin the sick man scratched his wants on the loose leaf of a hymn book, and in due time the pitiful

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note, after passing through the hands of a dozen prisoners, reached the healthy brother, who was learning to manufacture boots in the prison workshop.

The elder Gilfillan had deep pools of sentiment beneath a rough exterior. Furthermore, he took no heed of consequences. He pictured the sick brother, waiting tobaccoless in the dreary hospital, and he took a chance to supply him. The chance was a risky one. While passing the barred hospital yard he dexterously jerked a small cube of tobacco to the white-faced brother, who happened to be walking up and down inside, and he breathed a tremendous sigh of relief when he became certain that the warder in charge of the squad had not noticed the action. The elder Gilfillan was not afraid of any punishment that might fall upon himself; he was afraid lest the morsel of tobacco would be taken away from the sick youth who craved the delicacy.

But Nemesis was galloping on the heels of the two Gilfillans. Warder Bulstrode, looking down from his perch on the south tower, saw the movement, and Bulstrode was a conscientious officer. Five minutes after, the younger brother was stripped of the miserable gift, and the giver was dragged before the chief warder and sentenced to seven days' dark cell for a breach of prison discipline. In jail, charity is a virtue that is promptly smothered when the powers that be become aware of its existence.

It was the elder Gilfillan's first introduction to the dark cell. When he was pushed into the windowless chamber, the horrible, intense, suffocating darkness closed in upon him like a smothering pall. Blind and stupefied, he groped his way around the bare walls, the horror piercing him through and through like an icy sword. Afterwards he flung himself on the stone floor and lay like a man stunned by a terrific blow.

Some hours later he thought of the button. A medical student, who had once undergone a term of imprisonment at Enlota, had promulgated a theory by which the mental agony produced by dark cell treatment could be considerably relieved. He advised all prisoner friends who might visit "The Doghole" to toss a button into the air, and while away the time by searching for it on hands and knees in the darkness. The student understood the value of little things, and he recognized the fact that a continuous

hunt for a missing button would drag the mind away from the black abyss of insanity.

Gilfillan, groping blindly in the darkness, remembered the advice. He ripped a button from his striped jacket and tossed it into the thick air. Listening intently he heard it fall in a far away corner of the cell, and on hands and knees he started to search for it.

The sport fascinated him. When he discovered the metal disc he spun it up and again started in pursuit. The leaden hours rolled by slowly, but the game continued. Gilfillan blessed the button. He began to feel a love for it. He called to it when it hid from him in the cracks between the cold stones, and he cried hysterically over it when he discovered it after a long search. It seemed alive. It became a companion to him in that horrible, black vault into which not one single ray of light came to pierce the darkness.

It was on the evening of the sixth day that Nemesis clinched with Gilfillan. The prisoner had, up to that moment, thrown the button up a thousand times and found it on each occasion by laboriously searching on hands and knees. But on the evening of the sixth day a peculiar incident happened.

The prisoner threw the button up into the blackness, but it did not come down again.

Gilfillan waited with aching ears to hear the tinkle of the metal on the stone, but he heard no sound. The button didn't fall, and the silence that filled the cell as he stood listening, hurt him. He clenched his teeth to strangle a scream of terror that fear pushed to his lips. What was wrong?

The prisoner's trembling knees gave way under him and he sank to the floor. His hands moved out into the darkness and commenced to feel the stone flooring, but every nerve was taut.

On every other occasion when he had tossed up the button he had heard it fall distinctly, but he was certain that there was not the slightest sound after the last toss. Still, he would search.

The hot hands crept over the stones eagerly, feverishly. The fingers worked madly, but the bare floor mocked their search. There was no button. Again and again and again the prisoner searched. Through the cold hours of the night he crawled back-

wards and forwards till each joining between those tombstones of Hope seemed familiar to his blind fingers. But there was nothing on the floor. The button had not fallen after he had jerked it into the blackness!

Gilfillan tried to think. Why had it not returned? he asked himself. What had happened to it? There was nothing above him but bare walls, and yet — ! Where was it? Again and again he whispered the question of the thick black pall that seemed to heave around him. He asked it in a louder tone. He screamed it. Then something like a laugh came from one corner of that brain-destroying pit of horror, and Gilfillan was panic stricken.

Imagination, contrary to the opinion of scientific experts, lies in the stomach, and the bread and water diet that Gilfillan had been receiving was not sufficiently weighty to keep it down. The prisoner began to see things. The thick waves of curse-encrusted darkness welled up from the corners and smothered him. Invisible hands grasped his throat and strangled him. He kicked at the door leading into the dark corridor opening into the main wing, but Warder Tomlinson, of the night watch, was slightly deaf, and did not hear him. He raced around the cell with Terror — grasping, gibbering Terror — at his heels, and the stone vault echoed to his wild screams of agony.

When Warder Dunworth opened the door on the morning of the seventh day to acquaint Gilfillan of the fact that his term in dark cell was over, the hands of Terror had completed their work. The prisoner's face was battered beyond recognition where he had dashed against the walls in his mad race, and he shrieked wildly when the warder attempted to drag him into the light.

Eleven years afterwards, when an enlightened prison controller did away with the dark cells, the masons, tearing down the black vault at Enlota, found a jacket button securely fastened in a thick cobweb near the ceiling of the cell. But in the criminal ward of Enlota Insane Asylum a prisoner still spends his days and nights hunting for that button.

The Ghost Ship.*

BY C. A. BORDEN.

IT was early in the spring of 1907 that a most remarkable experience occurred to me, so remarkable indeed, that I lost no time in narrating it.

Wise men have looked askance at me while I recounted it, and fools have laughed, yet, not daunted, I offer this tale to the world, to ridicule or believe as it will.

Ever since a boy I have been fond of the sea. Its vastness, its strength and even its loneliness have always attracted and fascinated me.

Many were the days I spent on its great, heaving bosom, even before I reached my teens—fishing, sailing or rowing. When quite young I learned to sail, and by the time that I was eighteen I was an expert. I shipped before the mast on a lumber schooner for two years, studied navigation and at twenty-five was first mate on the schooner *Frances Howard* of San Francisco. I have since acted in the capacity of first officer on the passenger steamers plying between San Francisco and Japan, and it was on my return from one of these trips that my story begins.

For two years I had been running back and forth between here and the Orient without missing a voyage, and it was on the home bound run in February of this year that I decided, as I paced the bridge on my night watch, to take a vacation, something that I had not done for twelve years, since I had left my father's roof. So, as soon as we made port and I could leave, I went to the offices of the company and made arrangements to have them put another in my place for the next six months.

I then took a car out to my father's house on Devisidero Street. The old people were delighted to learn that I was to be with

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them for a time, and immediately commenced making plans for my entertainment.

I had been in town for about a week when one day, while down on the water front, I met my old friend, Shirley Keith.

I had known Shirley for years and liked him. He was a genial sort of fellow, with blue eyes and a jovial laugh; a laugh which he always used when greeting a friend, and which made one feel immediately at home with him.

"Well, Jack Kent," he said, as he put forth his hand, "what are you doing ashore? I haven't seen you for a month of Sundays."

"Just loafing," I replied. "I am taking a little vacation after twelve years of the strenuous life."

"Well, you no doubt need it, though you certainly don't appear to. But come on and go to lunch with me somewhere — I'm in a hurry."

I accepted, so he took me to Tait's, where we selected a table near the orchestra.

When we were seated and had given our orders, Keith said:

"You know that I have purchased the schooner yacht, *Morpheus.*"

"What, not the 'Ghost Ship'?"

"The same," he said with a laugh, "though I have not been annoyed by any nocturnal visitors since my ownership."

"Of course this ghost business is all bosh," I said. "A ghost is the hallucination of a diseased mind. Still there are some very wise men who believe in the existence of the supernatural, though I for one am not bothered by any such fool superstition, not that I consider myself wise in any sense of the word."

"Well according to her previous owners, very unusual things have occurred aboard the *Morpheus,* but I'm not worried, and in fact only wish that something of the kind would occur to me for a little excitement," he said.

"I may have a chance to see something of the kind, as I am going to take her to Los Angeles the end of the week and spend the summer in southern waters."

"That sounds very nice," I said.

"You had better come with me."

"I should like to, but I have determined to take a vacation ashore, and, besides, I have no stomach for ghosts."

"Rats!" he said, "I can fancy your being afraid of ghosts, and as far as the vacation is concerned, we will be ashore half of the time."

I wanted to go from the very start, and only needed a little persuasion to decide me, so we had not yet finished our noonday repast when I consented.

"Good," said Keith, reaching for my hand, "I knew that you would come around all right, and now we will go down to the boat."

He told me on the way that he had a crew of five men, beside a cook and mate, the latter's name being Hanson.

Keith summoned the launch by whistling through his fingers, and soon a beautifully finished boat, propelled by a two-horse gasoline engine, lay snorting alongside the wharf.

As we approached the yacht I noticed her fine lines and tapering spars, with the sunlight shimmering on her mahogany rails and brass work.

We climbed the companionway and stood upon her white deck. There was a general bustle and stir among her crew, scraping and splicing were going on, and the odor of fresh paint filled the air. I stood in the cockpit, looking forward, and could find no fault nor flaw in her construction.

She measured one hundred and twelve feet over all, with a ninety-five-foot water line. Her twenty-foot beam and high freeboard marked her the weather boat, while her towering masts and graceful lines showed the racer.

Keith watched me as I looked her over and noted the pleased expression on my face.

"So you like her looks, do you, old man?" he asked.

"I should say I do, she is superb."

"Come below," he said, leading the way down the after-companionway.

Below, she was even more attractive than on deck. The main saloon was a beauty, finished in rosewood and magnificently appointed. Forward of the saloon were eight staterooms, bath and galley, and opening off of the galley was the forecastle.

I was immensely pleased with her appearance and said so.

Keith called up the scuttle to the mate, who instantly came below.

The mate was plainly a Norwegian, both by accent and appearance. He was a large man, with strong, kindly face and a decided blond.

"Mr. Hanson, let me introduce you to Mr. Kent, who is going to be with us this summer."

The mate extended his hand and expressed himself very gravely as being glad to know me.

"How are the men getting along?" asked Keith.

"Very well, sir," answered the mate, respectfully. "We will be ready to leave at any time after tonight."

"Good! but I will not want to leave before Saturday at noon. I have some business that I must attend to."

We spent the rest of the afternoon on a tour of inspection and about six o'clock were taken ashore.

It was Thursday when Keith took me aboard and I put in the following day in moving my effects out and laying in a supply of white ducks, etc., which I thought might come in handy in Southern latitudes.

We were to sail Saturday at noon, but Saturday morning Keith came aboard and said that his business would detain him for several days and asked me if I would mind taking the *Morpheus* down to San Pedro for him.

"But what is your reason for not keeping the yacht over until you are ready to go yourself?"

"I want her to be down there next week, as I have made some engagements that I must keep, so if you will sail her down, I will take the train when I have completed my transactions, and arrive as soon as you will."

I gladly consented, and he went ashore, promising to be down Thursday or Friday of the following week.

At twelve o'clock we slipped our moorings and with all lower sails set, tore out of the Golden Gate, propelled by a brisk northeasterly breeze.

It was a cold, dreary sort of day, and the heavy chop outside was being lashed into foam by the wind.

The *Morpheus* leapt over the waves, churning the water into milky whiteness under her bows, and leaving a seething ribbon of white in her wake.

Hanson and myself, who had become good friends by this time, stood chatting behind the man at the wheel until we were clear of the headlands, when I went below for a nap.

I was awakened at four bells for dinner.

After a hearty meal, I lit my pipe and went on deck to find that the wind had risen during the afternoon and that we were bowling along at a good fifteen knots.

Hanson went to get his dinner and I stood watch.

Before he came on deck again, the wind, which had been blowing so steadily, suddenly dropped to a fitful breeze, and at last ceased altogether, leaving the sails flapping idly and the water slopping under our after overhang.

We lay in the trough of the swell, rolling heavily for several hours, and we were still in this position when I turned in.

Everything loose was banging and rattling, the fore boom tore back and forth on the traveller directly over my cabin, the doors slammed and squeaked and the sea swashed alongside with a hollow sough.

But these things didn't bother me, and I quickly fell asleep.

I was soon awake, however, and standing up looking out of my port. The wind had come up again, but from the opposite direction and we were careening wildly to starboard and rushing through the water. I was soon on deck and saw that quite a wind was blowing and was growing steadily worse.

Hanson had called all hands and was giving orders, while the men were running here and there, tightening things down and getting in sail. The foresail and jib were quickly furled, and we rode more steadily under mainsail and staysail. I then went below to finish my sleep and didn't come on deck again until eight bells had struck and Hanson came down.

The wind was still blowing heavily and we were running South-South-West, but not making much time on account of the headseas which were continually piling up before us.

Toward morning the wind was blowing almost a hurricane and all the next day we stood hove to.

Sunday evening it abated somewhat and we again continued our course, out of which we had been blown many miles.

Monday morning the cook told me at breakfast that strange noises during the previous night had alarmed the crew, and that they had heard that the schooner was haunted. I laughed at this and told the mate, who shook his head and smiled.

That day one of the crew came to me himself and said that he had heard peculiar sounds issuing from below the ship. He couldn't explain the sounds except that they were most terrifying.

I asked him what he had been drinking and sent him forward.

That night during my watch below I was aroused by the cook, who came to tell me that the man on watch forward had strangely disappeared, and no trace of him could be found.

The man's name was Christensen.

I went on deck, where Hanson corroborated the statement.

We came to the conclusion that he had fallen overboard, though no one had seen him go, and there were two other men on deck at the time.

Tuesday night another member of the crew went in the same mysterious manner, but this time the mate was watching him. He saw him start violently, give a little cry and grope toward the rail like a blind man. He called to him, but the man gave no heed. He called again, but still the fellow paid no attention, and steadily approached the rail.

Hanson rushed forward, and the man, whose name was Bergstrom, looked over his shoulder at the sound of the mate's feet,—a fearful expression came over his face,—and, with a scream of terror which caused the mate to pause, leaped into the sea.

Hanson hurried to the rail, but the wind was blowing strongly and it was a pitch black night, so he saw no sign of the unfortunate seaman, and by the time that he had run aft, pushed the wheelsman aside and put the schooner into the wind, Bergstrom was several hundred yards astern.

He lowered a boat and sent men out with lanterns, but they came back without Bergstrom, after spending an hour or more rowing back and forth.

When I came on deck a little while later, to relieve the mate, two of the three remaining members of our crew and the cook

stood against the foremast, while the third was at the wheel. I noticed the latter's face, thrown out in strong relief against the black sky by the binnacle light. It wore a strained, frightened expression, and every now and then he glanced over his shoulder at the dark, heaving sea, and seeing me behind him, started, and again fixed his eyes on the compass.

I ordered the men against the foremast to turn in, and stood the forward watch myself, but nothing unusual happened during the rest of the night and Hanson looked relieved when I reported all well at dawn.

I am not easily frightened, yet I must admit that the singular disappearance of two of our crew, in such an unaccountable manner, strangely moved me.

That night I determined to stand watch with the mate, to be on hand if anything out of the ordinary might occur.

Immediately after dinner I lit my pipe and went on deck, where I took up my position behind the forward skylight, a good vantage point from which to watch the man on the forecastle deck.

Everything ran smoothly for several hours, the watches were called and changed, and the wind, which had been blowing steadily all day, still blew us along at a rapid pace. I became sleepy after two hours of watching, with nothing to break the monotony, and at last dozed off.

I had been asleep for perhaps five minutes when I was awakened by a roar from the mate and the sound of running feet behind me. I instantly sprang to my feet and saw the forward lookout groping toward the rail. In two bounds I was upon him.

With a despairing cry the man tried to twist himself from my grasp, and fought with the strength of a tiger to get away, and he would have, had Hanson not seized him from behind and held him in an iron grip.

"What is the matter, man?" I asked, when he had quieted.

"O God! didn't you see it, didn't you see it?" he cried.

"No, see what?"

"I don't know what it was. Something horrible, that made me want to jump overboard to forget it! Looked like a lot of drowned people, all fish-eaten and bloated, beckoning me from the water. God, how it frightened me." His voice fell almost to

a whisper, and he shuddered and cast an apprehensive glance over his shoulder at the remembrance.

We took him below, where I poured him out a glass of spirits to steady his nerves, and where the bright cabin light seemed to comfort him.

The remainder of the night passed peacefully and at six in the morning I turned in.

I was very tired after my all night vigil and soon dropped into a dreamless slumber, from which I did not awaken until three in the afternoon.

When I rolled over and looked at my watch I was surprised at the lateness of the hour and quickly dressed, wondering why I had not been called.

Everything seemed unusually quiet and a strange foreboding of evil stole over me as I mounted the companion-way stairs. This quickly turned into a sort of terror when I saw that no one was at the wheel and the deck was absolutely deserted.

I called loudly several times, but the creak of the boom against the mast and the shrill scream of a sea gull, wheeling in flight overhead, were the only answers I received.

I rushed to the forecastle scuttle and peered below. No one was there. I rummaged through every part of the vessel, but not a soul was aboard! What had become of my companions?

With a lonesome feeling I ran on deck, glad to escape the increasing gloom of the cabin.

For the first time I noticed that one of the boats was gone. I scanned the sea far and near with my glasses, but no boat met my gaze—the straight azure line of the horizon stood out boldly against the lighter blue of the sky, unbroken.

With a curse I turned my attention to the compass and saw that the schooner was miles off her course, and I had no idea how long she had been running thus.

There had been no entry in the log for the day, so I worked out my position and found that I was still one hundred and twenty-five miles from my destination, due to the fact that I had been running, evidently most of the day, at right angles to my original course.

Having set the bow once more in the right direction I went

below again to light up and get something to eat, intending to spend the night at the wheel.

When I returned, however, the wind had dropped to almost nothing and at last ceased altogether.

I sat in the cock-pit for awhile, smoking, but at last went to my stateroom to read until the wind should freshen.

I read for several hours and had just laid my book down to look at the barometer when a peculiar sound on deck attracted my attention. I imagined that a man was walking up and down overhead. I listened intently. Yes, there it was again, nearer now and more distinct. I held my breath for a minute. The sound continued—tramp, tramp, up and down, up and down. The man, if man it was, evidently had water in his boots, for at every step I could hear the sough and ooze of water, and at every turn in his beat I heard it pattering on the deck.

In a frenzy of foolish fear and nervous apprehension, I rushed up to see what it was.

But all my fright was for nothing, for no one was there.

A smiling moon lit up a peaceful sea, the shadows rode slowly back and forth across the deck, and the boats swung noiselessly in their davits.

I surveyed the tranquil scene for several minutes and then, with a laugh at my own cowardice, went below to my book.

I had no sooner taken it up, though, than the noise which had previously startled me was resumed—Tramp, tramp, tramp. I started up and listened. The steps ceased for a minute, and I heard a deep groan, followed by a sigh as though from one in agony. Then the steps continued.

My heart was pounding wildly and the cold perspiration stood in heavy beads upon my forehead.

With a superhuman effort, I again went on deck. There was nothing there to cause alarm—everything was the same as before.

Waiting for a few minutes, I went back to my book.

As I neared my door the light in my room was suddenly extinguished and I was left in utter darkness except for the rays of the moon which filtered through the skylight and port-holes and fell in odd-shaped patches on the wall.

At first a dread of the supernatural stole over me and I was

for turning back, but upon reflection decided that a draught had blown my lamp out.

I lit it again and it burned as brightly as ever.

So nervous was I by this time that I locked and bolted my door.

I then attempted to finish the story I was reading, but my mind kept continually reverting to that terrible sound, and I was constantly on the alert for it to begin again.

Suddenly the ring knob of my door dropped with a sharp click, almost causing my heart to stop.

I looked at it intently for a second. Good God! it was turning! So was the bolt knob.

Petrified with fear and astonishment, I lay there for a moment, watching it as it slowly and deliberately turned. Then I sprang for the door. With all my strength, and I am no weakling, I strove to twist it back, I even bent the ring in my hand, but with irresistible force it began to open inward, very slowly. I flung my weight on it and braced myself against the bunk behind me, but to no avail. Slowly it forced me back, and at the same time the lamp was extinguished again.

With a hoarse sob of fear I loosened my grip on the door and let it swing unhampered, slowly inward, while I hurriedly struck a match to light the lamp again. The little point of flame flared up for a second, but immediately went out.

At the same time an icy hand seemed to touch me from behind, and I heard a low, deep moan issuing from the darkness.

In a frenzy of fear I endeavored to run from the gruesome cabin out into the starry night. But some inexplainable, undefinable thing held me at the door, and, strive as I would, I could not pass. I groped back to the bunk.

My foot suddenly came in contact with something on the floor and I tripped and fell flat across it. It seemed to be a big bunch of seaweed and was all wet and slimy.

I hurriedly jumped to my feet, drew away from it, and lit another match. This time it burned long enough for me to see what I had fallen over.

It was seaweed, but was all tangled and gnarled around what appeared to be the fish-eaten and bloated corpse of a man. At the same time the gruesome thing reared itself into a standing po-

sition and moved toward me. The match went out, but by the light of the moon I beheld its terrible and fearsome features as it advanced, peering out of the tangle of yellow kelp at me with its empty sockets.

I shuddered with horror and drew my sheath knife, striking out wildly, but the awful apparition did not stop, though I struck home repeatedlly.

My brain reeled, and I fell senseless to the cabin floor.

When I recovered consciousness the sun was streaming in upon me through the skylight.

How I welcomed its warm, generous, yellow light to drive away the awful darkness.

And how glad I was when I went on deck, after my cold breakfast of ham and bread, to hear the water gurgling alongside and find a gentle morning breeze wafting me steadily southward.

At three, that afternoon, I put in behind the breakwater at San Pedro and managed to let go an anchor and get down my headsails alone.

Keith, who had grown anxious about me and had been keeping watch from the veranda of the South Coast Yacht Club, on the bluff, was alongside in a launch almost as soon as the chain had rattled through the hawse pipe.

It certainly felt good to feel his strong hand-clasp and hear his friendly voice.

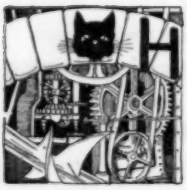
He told me that the men, terrified at the prospect of spending another night aboard, had overpowered the mate, put him into one of the boats, and slipped away, while I was asleep, and that they had been picked up by a lumber schooner and brought into San Pedro. And thus ended my most terrible experience.

We have since discovered that the mainmast of the *Morpheus* was one which had been in the Norwegian barque *Victory,* when she foundered off the Golden Gate in 1899, carrying all hands to the bottom. Perhaps this is an explanation.

Keith has had a new mast put in, anyway.

The Fire Dutchman.*

BY DON MARK LEMON.



HE was known as the Fire Dutchman, a nickname that he had justly earned by attending every fire of any consequence that had occurred in the city for a period of ten years. He was a fat little man, who had taken to heart literally the Biblical injunction, Let thy answer be always yea and nay, and no more, only he pronounced it, yah and nine.

But though he was not given to much speech, the little man had a laugh that continually welled up from his heart to his broad felt hat. It was mellow and bubbling, rich and warm, and sweet as a boiling pot of maple syrup. It seemed always sun-up in the little Dutchman's heart, and never sun-down.

Years before, when he first began regularly to attend every fire of any consequence, the firemen and police had sought to move him along as a nuisance, for he would get as close to the flames as flesh and blood dare get, while he invariably brought with him a big brass horn mounted on bicycle wheels, and during the progress of the fire he would blow the horn softly and musically.

But after a time the men grew to liking him about — his music was soothing and cheering by turn, and the superstition got to be accredited that this melody somehow checked the flames, and luck was always with the firemen while the little Fire Dutchman continued to blow on his great horn.

"Yah," he would say; "moosic iss goot to but out der vire mit! Yah? nine?" And then his laugh could be heard bubbling in the notes of the big brass horn.

There were certain minds that speculated about this assertion of the little Dutchman. Perhaps fire could be checked with music. Fire is but one form of energy or activity, and music has power to soothe and quiet. Could the Fire Dutchman be an in-

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ventive genius who was slowly perfecting a new fire extinguisher?

A certain horn was said to have blown down a certain wall in Biblical times — might not the Dutchman's horn blow down a wall of fire?

"Humph!" exclaimed the skeptical. "He is only a crazy Dutchman whose musical bump is excited by heat and flame."

"Perhaps so, and we will dismiss the fire-extinguishing theory," conceded the speculative. "But yet you must have noticed that there are strange notes in his playing. May it not be possible that his horn and not his brain has chords that are excited by fire? For instance, there is the æolian harp, that the wind makes music on: May not his horn be a thing that fire and heat can make music on? He may not blow into the horn at all, but merely seem to, and what we hear may be music made by the heat energy of the fire affecting some delicate instrument concealed in the horn. Heat melody, as it were, or fire translated into song."

"Humph!" again exclaimed the skeptical. "He's got a little sausage factory up at his house, and he may have brains enough to translate man's best friend into sausages, but never fire into song. Take my advice, friend, and buy your gasoline at some other garage."

But whatever the world thought about him, nothing seemed to affect the little Fire Dutchman save fire itself. That baked him brown and browner, till he grew to resemble one of his own smoked sausages. The wonder was he kept so fat, with the moisture toasted out of his body every few days at some fire, but the spring of laughter undefiled in his heart may have had something to do with the matter.

The pitcher that goes too oft to the well is at last broken, and the little Fire Dutchman who ran too often to fires was at last killed. A wall toppled on him and his horn at a great fire one night in a down-town wholesale district, and when they got to him he was quite dead.

They took him up and bore him away in his horn. "The little Fire Dutchman is dead — in a horn!" the burly policemen jested, ashamed to confess their personal grief at the sad accident.

After the funeral, which was attended by every fireman who could get off duty, a gentleman who had taken a deep interest in

the disposal made of the horn called on the widow of the little Fire Dutchman and offered to purchase the sausage shop.

The sum he offered was so considerable that the widow turned the place over to him the following day, and moved her personal belongings into other quarters.

Immediately the gentleman went on a tour of investigation and found that all the machinery used in the making of sausages on the premises was run by electric power. But yet there was no electric plant on the premises, and no wires leading into the house.

Again the gentleman examined the crushed horn that the little Fire Dutchman for a period of ten years had carried to every fire of any consequence that had occurred in the city. Ah! could he rediscover the principle of the delicate, broken mechanism concealed in the horn?

If so, then with capital to back him, a vast fortune was at his command. For here was the means of translating into electric energy the untold heat-power lost every year beyond recovery in the innumerable fires that ravage towns and cities, and which, until the little Fire Dutchman had hit upon his invention, no man had thought of utilizing.

A Hired Gallant.*

BY FLORENCE MARTIN EASTLAND.

WOMAN, however unattractive to men, may sometimes reverse the condition, if honest enough to admit the fact and sufficiently clever in devising ingenious methods of accomplishment.

So reasoned Jessie Rogers, a school teacher by choice and a spinster by accident. Nothing short of an accident could consign a loving heart and a domestic disposition to a companionless fireside.

She rose rather suddenly from the couch where she had been thinking intently and, crossing the room, studied her plain face in the mirror.

"I *am* homely," she sighed, "but that should not prevent my enjoying life. Certainly my preponderance of gray matter ought to steer my bark into more exciting channels than endless grade-work, teachers' meetings and institutes. 'Ay, there's the rub': I cannot man my bark. Not that I want the man really — I know how to steer," she added quickly; "but I would like his attention — his services. I want to be able to say, with the important air of the giddiest girl who teaches only for money to buy new clothes, 'I am going out this evening.' I want to exult in the knowledge that such a statement will not mean an engagement with several of my kind — respectable, conventional and dull. In fact — well, why should I evade the truth? — I'm tired of being permanently shelved without a display at all and I want to come down on the counter just to see if some one, no matter who, with a 'Here's something nice,' will not haul me out from behind the fresher, gayer stock."

She paused in the act of smoothing back an unruly strand of hair. Impulsively she picked out the pins and soon a fluffy crown

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replaced the plainer coiffure. From some drawer she unearthed a brilliant comb, a present from a pupil whose lack of taste she had deplored.

"There," she observed as she adjusted it and cocked her head to obtain the effect, "that's isn't a bad beginning. To continue my metaphor, I am now brushed up and ready for a bargain tag. You know," she continued, addressing the face in the glass, "that you, by fun-killing economy, have saved a thousand dollars against that day, some time distant yet, thank heaven! when you will become a back number in your profession and a regular patron of a neurotic specialist." Her wholesome laugh was a negation. "Now, if it takes every cent, you've got to do it. You are going to gratify your inclinations once."

Seizing a pencil she wrote steadily for a little, read what she had written, and tore it up. Again she applied herself, with the same unsatisfactory result. At last she read the written product doubtfully, put on her hat at an unaccustomed angle and sought a down-town business block. Before a door lettered "Robert Bradbury, Attorney at Law," she halted with a conscious air of doing something freakish. A little flush covered her sallow cheek as she passed into the office and greeted the lawyer.

"So glad to see you, Jessie," he exclaimed as he placed a chair. "Going out home with me for dinner? We have been wondering what had become of you."

"Thank you — not to-day." She hesitated a little while the flush deepened. "I — I came to consult you about this."

She took the paper from her chatelaine and with a nervous laugh tossed it on his desk. Astonishment rounded Mr. Bradbury's mouth and lifted his heavy eyelids.

"Why, Jessie! Do you mean this really?"

"Certainly," was the spirited answer. "There is nothing improper in hiring an escort when a woman cannot attract one, and society and custom unite in frowning upon her going about unattended. I am willing to pay ten dollars per week for a young man of good character and refinement to attend me three evenings out of the seven. It is simply a business arrangement. Will you, or will you not, insert that advertisement, act as my agent, and look up references if any persons respond?"

"Of course I will — gladly, too. The novelty of the idea rather startled me, but in the light of a business affair, I am not opposed to it. Any restrictions about love-making?"

"There won't need to be any. I can manage that — I always have," she finished ruefully.

Several days elapsed before she received a telephone message from Mr. Bradbury requesting her to come to his office. From the flood of applicants who evinced Barkis-like inclinations he had selected two, either of whom met all requirements. He described both as correct in appearance and with excellent references; but, if there were a choice, he would incline toward Lindsay Morris, who was somewhat older and a member of a dancing club.

"Engage him," decided Jessie instantly, "but give me the address of the other in case of need. Be explicit in saying to Mr. Morris that his check will be sent at the end of each week and that I desire him to avoid mentioning to me that there is a business understanding between us. At any time he wishes to terminate the contract he can do so through you. One thing more: He must not take me to such expensive places of entertainment that he cannot save half the weekly check. I will consider church-going, lectures and calling, with an occasional dance or attendance at the theater ample return for my investment. I know this is a departure for me from a time-honored program," she explained half-apologetically, half-defiantly, "but I am tired of sitting alone in poky boarding-houses and occupying an elevated mental plane. I have enlarged so many youthful characters I want to try an experiment on my own before it ossifies. I am going to learn to dance," she further contributed.

The next evening Jessie was called to the parlor by an unusual event. A gentleman had sent up his card. With inward perturbation she read his letter of introduction from Mr. Bradbury and paid a silent yet fervent tribute to the lawyer's ability in selecting an escort.

Lindsay Morris was indeed all that could be desired — courtly, attentive, entertaining. The time passed delightfully, and when Jessie ran to her mirror to confide to her reflection the brilliant success of her plan, she was amazed to find herself transformed. Animation lent color to her complexion and brightened her dull

eyes. Excitement contributed an alertness of expression quite new to her, while the security of her independence gave a dash of becoming recklessness.

"How well he did it," she chuckled. "Almost did I forget there was a business arrangement when he requested the honor of my company to the dance Wednesday evening. I believe I will take a private dancing lesson to-morrow after school."

Which she did, further decimating her bank account through the addition of some furbelows to her modest wardrobe — a reckless extravagance over which she gasped when she figured the sum total, but experienced no regret.

The club dance was a most enjoyable affair, to Jessie at least, whose dancing improved under Morris's patient tutelage. Although evidently popular, his attentions to Jessie were as punctilious as though no weekly check were forthcoming. He introduced her to almost every man in the room; and with secret satisfaction she saw nothing to indicate that their courtesies to her were suggested. They left her not a dull moment. The scheme was certainly working beautifully.

On Friday evening her escort took her to the theater. He had chosen excellent seats and between the acts Jessie was pleased to recognize a few friends and acquaintances, who bestowed upon her and her companion a second curious glance. She was glad they saw Morris, if they did wonder how he came to be with her, for he was a man to be proud of. After the play he proposed supper at a café.

"But that would cost too much," objected Jessie. "Under the agreement ——"

"I beg your pardon," stiffly interrupted Morris. "Did you mention agreement?"

His commanding air brought forth a stammered apology from Jessie, who meekly accompanied him to the café, where she thought to punish him with a lavish order; but he evinced no surprise, even proposing some expensive additions. On Saturday, however, when the first check was due Morris, she drew it for fifteen dollars instead of ten, and gave it to the postman in the morning. Shortly after luncheon a messenger brought her a five-dollar check signed by Lindsay Morris. No mention of the

occurrence was made when he took her to church Sunday evening, and Jessie enjoyed this exciting little by-play.

The program was varied the succeeding week by a concert, a call on a friend they discovered they had in common, and a dinner at a new hotel. To Jessie one of the delights of the situation was that no suggestions came from her. There was such a pleasure in wondering what he would next propose, and it always proved more enjoyable than she could have thought of.

Early in the third week, when he came merely to spend the evening, he encountered another caller, who was introduced as Mr. Howerton. Another teacher in the house was called into the parlor and the four played whist. Jessie managed to conceal her pleasure when Morris reminded her, as he rose to go, of the dance Wednesday — and also a little later, when Mr. Howerton, taking his departure, asked permission to accompany her to the play the following night. On both occasions other men dropped in unexpectedly and she had to be excused in order to keep her engagement.

"Men are just like sheep," she laughed as she put away her new evening gown. "I might have sat here forever before one got inside the fence if I hadn't let down the bars; but with one in, the rest are eager to follow."

It was not surprising that she became popular. The terms of her contract lent her assurance. Men sought her society and she grew prettily independent and exacting. The sudden appreciation was wine to her intellect, which shone with unsuspected brilliance. Her admirers forgot her plainness. She was dependent upon Morris no longer; indeed, she went out almost as frequently with Mr. Howerton, a younger man, of fine appearance.

A month passed quickly in this new and rejuvenating atmosphere. Jessie was in such demand by Morris, Mr. Howerton, or some other representative of the once mole-eyed sex, that she found scant time for the course of study she had planned. At school she was obliged to utilize every spare moment during intermissions to keep up with the work. Sometimes she had a guilty feeling that she was not doing her duty when her enjoyments lulled all desire to worry over John Smith's moral development or Mary Jones's frivolity. She regarded a happy smile and some

of her excess flowers and bonbons now and then as a plain shirking of her obligations; but perhaps John Smith, with a smelly rose on his coat-lapel, and Mary Jones, sampling Huyler's Best, were as greatly benefited after all. She began to experience a comfortable feeling that the characters of the future mothers and fathers were not altogether dependent upon her training. And her callers multiplied.

One evening when Morris came to take Jessie to a lecture he found Mr. Howerton there before him.

"There appears to be a mistake," smiled Jessie, who could not appear surprised at the outcome of her plans, "for which I must be responsible. I find I have promised to go with both of you. I will telephone a friend near by to go with us. You don't mind calling for her, do you, Mr. Morris?"

"Certainly not," he returned, but added as he followed her to the telephone in the hall; "but if I am not violating a rule" — with a darkening of his brows — "may I ask if my duties include ——"

"They do," replied Jessie promptly.

His manner toward her friend was faultless — he exhibited no trace of annoyance — yet he bade Jessie good-night with no reference to a future engagement. This was the entrance of the serpent into Jessie's Eden, and she taxed herself with having played double and fell asleep with a suspicious moisture on her cheek.

For two days Morris did not appear. Jessie was so miserable that she, for the first time, could not enjoy a concert with Mr. Howerton. She was fretful and impatient and bade fair to find herself as devoid of cavaliers as she had once been. She scolded herself soundly before the mirror.

"To think," she observed scathingly, "that you could not abide by a business contract. When things were progressing so well you must let sentiment interfere and lead you to a silly, childish act like that. Why couldn't you let well enough alone? No; you must feign a preference for some one you know doesn't care a straw about you, of course, just to — Oh, dear! he will never come back, and he is worth all the rest."

A big tear rolled down the cheek in the mirror before the face,

heavy with grief, dropped to the reflected slender arm on the dressing-table.

Her prediction of Morris's defection appeared verified on the succeeding morning, when a messenger sent by Mr. Bradbury arrived with Morris's formal resignation. He merely expressed regret that his services were no longer needed.

"At least," commented Jessie, "*he* was able to regard it simply as a business matter. I wish I had — or else not gone into business so extensively." Which was an admission she would not have made even to her reflected face if her plan had continued working along prescribed lines.

Everything went wrong the following day. Restless and nervous, she was unable to sleep until almost dawn, and awoke too late for breakfast. She tore her coat as she hurried into the school building two minutes late, with the rebuking eyes of the principal upon her.

"That means a fine," she groaned.

Her pupils were trying, and the day seemed interminable. Not so far distant just then rose the vision of the nerve-tinker. But possessing a perfect-working liver she grew more hopeful after she had excused herself to Mr. Howerton after dinner and summed up the situation.

"Dear me!" she reflected in the privacy of her apartment, "I need not blame my plan. The results exceeded my anticipations. I lost my head, that's all — no; it isn't, you goose, and you know it. If that were all, the damage could be repaired by an apology and a resumption of official duties."

She was perilously near tears again, but pulled herself together determinedly.

"Don't waste your time in vain regrets, foolish one," she admonished. "Take your medicine bravely. Smile now. There! that's better. Now don't let me see you crying for the unattainable again — only Paradise looked so dear," she concluded with a pathetic little droop to her mouth.

She rose briskly, put on a becoming house-gown, a recent acquisition, and tried to pin her attention to grading examination papers. Her pencil strayed and she was vexed to find herself gazing sentimentally at a virile face she had neatly executed at

the end of a composition on "Domestic Animals," while murmuring tenderly:

"He has a firm, shapely mouth and such frank eyes."

Hurriedly she walked to the window and stood staring into the darkness. When she sat down again she leaned back in her chair with arms above a smiling face.

"Why should I try to conceal my joy?" she reasoned. "It is something I have not sought and a secret I must not betray; but it warms and fills those dull, tenantless chambers of my soul and fires my placid blood. I am happier with it hidden in my heart than I ever was before. It endows me in an hour with a keener, more sympathetic knowledge of life's meaning than I could have acquired through years of erudition. Instead of prudishly shutting my eyes to its existence, I will cherish it, gloat over it, expand through it. Yes," she nodded as her glance fell on the drawing, "I will even gratify my eyes by an expression of it, although I shall be careful to avoid such publicity as that."

In an exalted state of mind Jessie erased her pencil's lapse and applied that object to its legitimate use. The last paper was marked when she was summoned to the telephone.

Her heart fluttered as she recognized the voice inquiring for Miss Rogers. Her quavering "Yes" was to her such a betrayal of relief and joy that she demanded sharply, "To whom am I speaking?" Even under strong excitement her prepositions fell into their right places. The rules of grammar, beneath the pressure of constant expounding, had been shredded, double-pulverized and rubbed in.

After a little she hung up the receiver and with a springy step and an elevated head ascended the stairs to add some touches to her toilet. When she entered the shabby parlor she wore an opera-cloak, one of the aforesaid furbelows.

"Going out?" inquired a sister teacher who was yawning over "The Application of Froebelism."

"Yes."

"Rather late, isn't it?" her interlocutor persisted.

"A little supper," explained Jessie, wondering, when the other sniffed significantly, if she could divine that it meant the small company of two.

The bell ringing at that moment, Jessie fastened her cloak and arranged the gauzy scarf on her head before she opened the door. She did not admit the caller, but after a brief conversation, joined him.

It was not rather late, but decidedly so, when Jessie returned. Morris followed her into the deserted parlor where, under the dim gaslight, he kissed her with an air of proprietorship before he asked:

"May I come to-morrow evening, dear?"

She blushed as she answered archly:

"I have an engagement with Mr. Howerton. It will be the last."

"The next evening, then," begged Morris, who, after receiving a favorable reply, continued musingly: "I am under immense obligations to Howerton. Without him I should never have screwed my courage to the point of terminating a wholly delightful business contract in order to prosecute an unpromising courtship. I could see how much in earnest Howerton was" — Jessie smiled indulgently — "and it drove me to desperation to have my admiration and attentions accepted as a matter of business. I cannot understand," he went on after a short, well-filled pause, "why you, surrounded by so many admirers, should take it into your dear head to pay for an escort."

"For novelty," was the truthful reply. "Wasn't that your motive also?"

Morris's affirming laugh was less hearty and not so prolonged, but his farewell partook of both qualities in a greater degree. To her glorified face in the mirror the happy woman held up a warning finger before she doubled over in silent merriment.

Punctual to the moment Mr. Howerton appeared the ensuing evening. The people of the house had so often taken themselves off when Jessie's callers came that it appeared to have been a private agreement to discontinue the custom. They lounged about reading or writing — and listening, as Jessie vexedly felt. A few minutes' conversation with her visitor was all she needed. She wanted the rest of the time to answer a lovely letter from Lindsay. Her restlessness communicated itself to Mr. Howerton, who proposed a walk.

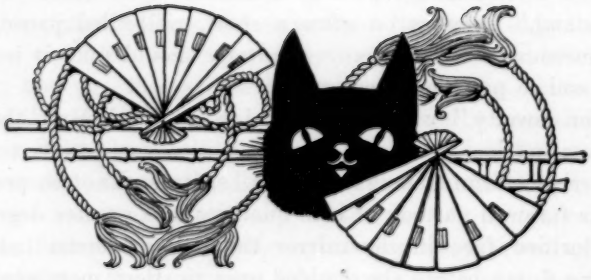
"Was that right?" he inquired when they reached the pavement.

"Exactly. I have something to say to you which I am not yet ready to tell them. I am going to be married to Lindsay Morris ——"

"I suspected as much."

"And I want to assure you how greatly I appreciate your past kindness and courtesy. Under the circumstances ——" She hesitated and he laughingly completed the sentence:

"Of course our business relations are at an end."



The Slot-Machine of the Storms.*

BY WILLIAM CALHOUN.

OOK, Wilson, see what I've found!"

Bowen held in his hand a shining five-dollar gold piece which he had just picked up from the rocks.

We were on our annual outing. We had run up the river in a small steamer to the head of navigation. In a large rowboat, loaded with necessary camping outfit, we laboriously continued our course till we reached the wilderness. Here we found an old hunter and trapper named Gibbons, with whom we rested for a night. Gibbons had spent the evening telling tales of his adventures in that region. Just before retiring he told us of the cliff at which we were now snugly camped.

"You'll be apt to like it there. Plenty of game and the best fishin' along the river. A fine spring bubblin' out o' the solid rock at the foot o' the cliff. Can't recommend you to a better place. Always camp there when I'm up that way. Used to go there for money from the rocks," said Gibbons, warming up to the occasion. "For ten years, after every storm, I found gold coins scattered about on the flat rocks below the cliff. Sometimes there was much, sometimes only a little. I went often in mild weather, but never found gold except when a storm had passed over. Once I stayed a month, but not a thing did I get till a terrible wind came along, after which I found five ten-dollar gold pieces as bright as the blaze in the fire there, and though I watched for two weeks I found nothing else. Another time, when a cyclone had gone through, I found three twenty-dollar pieces. Spent a week tryin' to explain the mystery, but had to give it up. No human hand put that money there. It just rained out o' the clouds. One day, when it was blowin' a hurricane, I heard some-

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thing strike the cliff, as if it had been shot from the sky; then it fell jingling on the rocks below. Known that to happen several times.

"For ten years it was always the same old story, money after a wind and nothin' any other time. Eight years ago it stopped fallin' and, no matter how hard the wind blew, from that day to this no more money has ever been found. I guess it has all rained out. I'll take you there to-morrow."

For a half hour he answered the questions our curiosity prompted, and then we went to our cots. On the morrow, Gibbons guided us to the spot and, promising to return in a week, left us. We had established our camp under shelter of the precipitous cliff which overhung the river, eaten our supper, and were leisurely strolling about admiring the romantic surroundings, when Bowen found the money. Our surprise is now easily understood.

Under ordinary circumstances a man is surprised to find gold coins, but, with Gibbons' strange tale fresh in our ears, we stared at each other in speechless amazement. We looked the shining money over and over to make sure. We scanned the bald face of the cliff, glanced at the wild forest and the river, peered into the blue sky above, all in vain, for some clue as to the presence of the money. Then we tried for signs of recent human presence, but none existed. We searched for other coins, but found no more. Finally, we went to our couches in the tent, there to speculate and theorize on a possible explanation of the mystery, until, through sheer exhaustion, we fell into a flighty sleep.

The next morning Bowen built a fire while I went to the spring for a pail of water. On my way I passed the edge of the steep and along over the rock floor, level and white as a city pavement. I was returning when my eye caught the glitter of a twenty-dollar gold piece lying at my feet. In my excitement I called to Bowen and together we examined the rock thoroughly and found three pieces. As we had investigated well the evening before, it was clear the coins had arrived in some manner during the night. That any human being would deliberately put them there, even had it seemed possible that one could be near enough, was preposterous.

We went around to the other side of the highland, from which

we could reach the top of the cliff, where we found ourselves on a grassy level of perhaps an acre in area. It was a beautiful spot, covered with trees and singularly free from undergrowth. The surface sloped gently away from the ledge, finally forming the floor of the dense forest in the rear.

Gibbons had told us of an Indian trader named Groom who had dwelt there in an early day and whose house was a favorite resort of Indians, trappers, and overland travelers for the far West. When a lad, Gibbons had often seen the great log cabin full of strangers. At last the Indians were removed to other lands, the overland route gradually changed to better paths, and Groom was deserted by his old customers. One day he was found dead. He was buried beneath his hearthstone, and then the locality slowly drifted back to its primitive condition. All that remained of the house was a tall stone chimney, near the edge of the precipice. By this old ruin stood the trunk of what had once been a great sugar tree.

Nothing about the place, however, seemed to have any possible connection with the gold. The history of the spot gave no explanation of the presence of coins at the base of the ledge fifty years later. Bowen and I examined the chimney, but found naught save the ragged stones. The stubby old sugar tree by it creaked in the breeze. This forsaken acre furnished no trace at all, and we descended. We did little else for several days, except to fruitlessly investigate and theorize. Strangely, too, we found no more coins, though we watched persistently.

At the end of the week, according to promise, Gibbons arrived. He heard our experience with interest on only one point, the fact that the phenomenon should recur after years of cessation. To our conjectures he paid little attention.

"No use tryin'," said he skeptically, "I've investigated every nook and cranny. Spent ten years watchin' and pryin', off and on, 'round this old headland, crackin' my brain over the cause. Have sat all night and all day, more times than I'm years old, tryin' to discover the secret, and all I ever learned was to hear the sudden jingle of the metal when it struck the cliff in time of storm and rattled down. It wasn't thrown from the top, for I've heard it while sitting at the foot of the chimney up there in

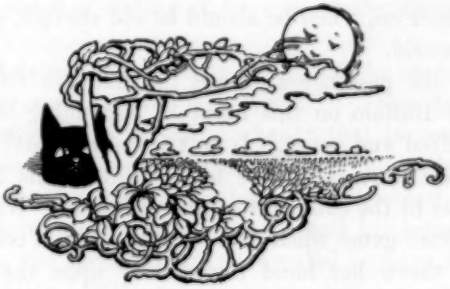
broad daylight. You may study it till you're old, and that's all you'll ever know."

As we discussed the matter a gale began blowing. It grew stronger rapidly and was accompanied by the rumblings of distant thunder. Huge black clouds approached with frightful velocity. In our location under the precipice, protected from the gathering storm, we could watch the trees lash each other like whips.

Suddenly, as if by magic, two gold eagles dropped straight from the clouds overhead and rang resonantly on the stones near. No chance this time for mistaken senses, as three of us witnessed their descent. They came from the storm-laden sky, no doubt at all about it. Then came another and another, and following them a shower of coins. It seemed a dozen or more were jingling around us. A fearful peal of thunder heralded a fresh burst of the angry elements and the wind raged with the fury of demons. We heard a deafening crash overhead and the old chimney came tumbling in a heap to the foot of the cliff, the sugar tree with it. Then the velocity of the wind began to slacken, the sound of crashing timber ceased, and the storm gradually subsided.

When our fears were somewhat allayed we began to reconnoitre. Near the heap made by the fallen chimney we found a distorted tube, resembling the gutters and conductors placed at the eaves of houses. It was battered, rusty and rotten with age and contained several heaping handfuls of coins and a number of musty parchments and papers. On examining the wreckage of the chimney we found that the tube had been carefully placed in a chamber specially arranged for its reception. Two slits had rusted in the sides of the tin, one a few inches from the bottom and the other higher up. It was evident that the heavy winds, shaking the sugar tree and the chimney, had made of the tube a nickel-in-the-slot machine, by forcing coins through the narrow apertures. After the coins had worked down to the level of the higher slot it was eight years before the second and lower one rusted through, thus causing the dropping to resume. As the tube, by the weathering of the chimney, lay inclined, it formed a sort of shute. A coin, once slipping through, slid along the spouting for a few inches and finally shot over the precipice, having the appearance of coming from skyward.

We found papers recording the honorable discharge of Malachi Groom as a veteran of the War of 1812, and a package of letters written by his sweetheart, Cecilia Bliss, concerning whom we learned some strange facts from a faded manuscript. She had been captured by the Indians. On Groom's discharge he had made diligent search and ascertained that she had perished at the stake a few feet from the old sugar tree. He gathered the ashes and buried them where the stake had stood and erected the stone chimney above the spot, adding to it the cabin that he might dwell near her resting place. On the will was the indistinct signature of the old soldier, bestowing the money to the finder, on condition that the letters be laid by Groom's side. Under Gibbons' guidance we reburied the letters beneath the old hearthstone near which the ashes of his sweetheart had reposed for ninety years.



The Sword of His Father.*

BY ETHEL CLAIRE RANDALL.

E were six who sat about the table under the garish light of the swinging lamp. A Mr. Baroque took the head, opposite to him was Major Millait, a portly cavalryman with chin blue from much shaving, on his right were my brother and myself, while our vis-à-vis was a well-known opera singer — Mrs. Cantel in private life — and a boy of nineteen or thereabouts, whose name appeared on the passenger list as "K. Sinhala." This lad seemed greatly attracted to Mr. Baroque, with whom he entered into conversation. He told the elder man that he was a foreigner, a Cingalese by birth, and an orphan, that he had gone to a Catholic mission school where he had learned music, English, French and Latin, and where he had been befriended by the old priest, whom he was now on his way to visit. He added, further, that he had a notion of becoming a priest later on, when he should be old enough, and had seen a bit of the world.

Such were the passengers aboard the *Babylon City,* bound to Chicago from Buffalo on this night of September the twentieth, nineteen hundred and seven. It was storming heavily, but being good sailors we scorned to take to our state-rooms and gathered about the table in the cabin for a game of cards. We were in the thick of a second game when Mrs. Cantel, after a continuous run of bad luck, threw her hand impatiently upon the cloth. The cards slid in regular procession, one after another, to the floor, as the boat rolled to a sudden swell. With light laughter we caught at the table edge to steady ourselves.

"Just the night for ghost-stories," I suggested, seeing that no one made a move to resume the play.

"Ghost-stories are passé," avowed Mrs. Cantel. "The fash-

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ionable method of counteracting sleep is to have one's mind read."

"Mind reading, hey!" cried the Major. "I've heard a lot about the Indian beggars being able to tell what one thinks, but I'd give a fiver to see it done."

"Can't be done!" The manner of Mr. Baroque's abrupt assertion winged the thought across my brain that its finality of sentence was less a mere statement of fact than a desire to foster conviction in himself.

At this moment, however, and amid the "Ohs!" and the "Ahs!" and the "Then how the deuce do you account for so-and-so?" of Mrs. Cantel and the Major, my brother addressed the young foreigner, who had been silent since the card playing ceased.

"Is it true, Mr. Sinhala, that your countrymen have a special gift that way?"

"Hey! do you mean to say, young man, that you can read my mind?" burst in the Major.

The boy bowed an affirmative and turned to my brother.

"The Brahmn holy men undoubtedly can fathom the innermost workings of another's mind. It is a characteristic trait in some families in India and elsewhere in the Orient, as much as is the peculiar color or setting of the eye, or the shape of the hand, in others."

No one of us missed his reply. Not that he spoke loudly. Indeed his voice was exceedingly low pitched. But its halting tones were memorable for a caressing quality that in sonorous and vibrant richness reminded one irresistibly of the timbre of a muted 'cello. We stared at him in a silence that throbbed with the dead echoes of his beautiful voice. But beyond his being well enough to look upon, the face and figure revealed nothing appreciable of their personality. Yet one's instinct groped for the *something* that lay masked behind the studiously observed conventionality. I noted the repose of the figure, and read into the attitude a latent restlessness akin to the glozed calm of an animal on the spoor of its prey. My glance dropped to the hands resting on the green baize of the table covering, and I thought I could trace more than a suggestion of cruelty in the careless interlacing of the fine, long fingers. Still, the face, except for an Eastern gravity that to our

Occidental eyes embued it with subtlety, contradicted these impressions. I was laughing at myself for a visionary, when I caught the look Mr. Baroque had fixed on Sinhala's face. It was a gaze of such searching, yet at the same time, such puzzled inquiry, of such agonized questioning — as if it asked out of the longing of a lifetime that the boy's countenance give to him the key to its mystery, that my thoughts rebounded upon themselves. That look, though it met merely one of conventional regard, set these two apart from the others about the board, linked them together, as it were, in some intangible way, clearly felt, but not at all understood. What mute demand had been made by Mr. Baroque, what answer would be vouchsafed?

The momentary pause brought us to ourselves. The Major cleared his throat, Mr. Baroque shrugged his shoulders like a man trying to rid himself of an uncanny dread, and the spell was broken.

"But what have you to do when you read one's mind?" queried Mrs. Cantel, with a shiver that was not altogether affected.

"Simply allow me to place my hand on yours, Mrs. Cantel."

As Mrs. Cantel hesitated and looked foolish, I thrust mine across the table toward him. He pushed it away with a sudden smile, and I drew back abashed and somewhat hurt, while he turned from me to Mr. Baroque with what I fancied was a gleam of sinister triumph in his laughing glance. He put one hand firmly over his neighbor's clasped ones.

"A penny for Mr. Baroque's thoughts? Who buys?"

"Yes, yes, surely we will" — "five," "ten," "one hundred," we chorused, and the Major renewed his offer of a "fiver, begad."

Mr. Baroque sat as if turned to stone. Abruptly Sinhala began to speak:

"A seemingly interminable road winds through a tropical forest. From its either side gigantic trees throw their branches together in the semblance of an arch, so that its dim whiteness alone makes it discernable even in the glare of mid-day. Along this highway a horseman rides leisurely, his head bent in thought, his eyes upon the path. Almost at his horse's feet lie a few stones roughly, forming the device of a swastika with straggling arms. By another observer the symbol would have been passed unnoticed,

but to this man, a lover of Romany traditions and a frequenter of gypsy encampments, it is as full of significance as was one knight's coat-of-arms to a fellow-knight in the days of chivalry. It tells him that a family of a certain Romany tribe has passed that way. Certain of being able to overtake them, he touches up his horse.

"Soon he sees a moving shadow ahead of him, and makes out a cart, such as Flemish milk-carriers use, drawn by a woman and a dog. In answer to his hail the strange caravan halts. The woman, on hearing his greeting in her native speech, drops the cross-bar of the cart-tongue, against which she has been straining, and advances a step or two, while her trace-mate, a huge, gaunt, white dog, sinks panting in his tracks. The occupant of the cart raises his head to stare at the traveller with eyes burning-bright from fever. For a second the horseman is afraid — afraid of the silent group. The fancy flashes across his brain that in all but their eyes — the six great balls of fire glaring through the dusk into his — these wayfarers are dead. The ragged woman, who is yet but a slip of a girl with a small, triangular face framed in gossamer-like hair, is dead; the man with his tangled black curls and skeleton figure, is dead; the phantom white dog is dead.

"With an effort the horseman shakes off the illusion as the utter destitution of their circumstances and the hopelessness of the man's fight for life forces itself upon him. He offers them his hospitality — they are upon his plantation now — and it is but the length of the road to his bungalow. And the girl, seeing a friend in their sore straits, accepts for her father, who she says, was cruelly hurt a month or so ago. Thus, with the tacit understanding of good-fellowship between them, they make all haste to the house, where everything possible is done for the sick man's comfort.

"But without avail. In less than a month Zillah, for such is the girl's name, Zillah and the dog are alone in the world. Then all the chivalry in the man's nature wells up, and he, suddenly aware that the girl he has hitherto regarded as a mere child, is in reality a woman, marries her out of hand.

"For a few years, life on the plantation is an idyll. But one day the man tires — the next he is gone."

The speaker paused as brusquely as he had plunged into his narrative. I looked at Mr. Baroque, the grewsome imagery of the story's horseman fastening itself upon me, for the man had not stirred since the beginning of the recital, though his distended eyes now gazed beyond Sinhala into space. The Cingalese folded his arms across his chest and recommenced.

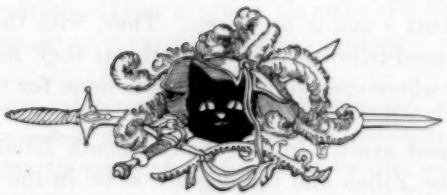
"With her child in her arms, the gypsy wife goes in search of its father, the love she has borne him sharpened to the rankle of hate. Her purpose drives her east and west and north and south relentlessly, till, wearied by bootless wanderings, she returns to the plantation to find the valley choked with flotsam. Poverty-stricken, without strength for further effort, she leaves her son in the care of the mission Fathers. They, good men, labor to erase from the boy's mind the understanding, even the memory of his mother's legacy, not realizing that a heritage of hate once bequeathed can never be obliterated from the heart of a gypsy, for the stubble will roughen the field long after the harvest is garnered. And the harvest is to him who will but wait."

Sinhala pushed back his chair and rose from the table.

"Voici le sabre de mon père," he said, bowing nonchalantly to the company.

Instinctively we turned with one accord to Mr. Baroque.

He was dead in his chair.



The Burglar from Heaven.*

BY JENNIE MARTHA CHENERY.

HIS study was shrouded in darkness, but David Graham was still sitting by the desk alone. The realization of his loneliness was so intense, so piercing, that he felt like one who, in a horrid nightmare, is hurled suddenly over the brink of a precipice and, by a flash of blasting thought, knows himself to be face to face with doom.

His genial, sunny disposition had delighted in sunshine, in vivid coloring, and all other beautiful, glowing marvels which Nature bestows upon her children, and now — the darkness seemed to clutch him with cold, blighting fingers, withering hope and joy with its poisonous touch. It was not only that the darkness of night had veiled the earth for a time from mortal view — far blacker were the grim shadows that enveloped David's soul, shutting him off forever from love and happiness. For he was blind.

At first he would not believe the dread verdict of the great specialist. He had listened, as in a dream, to a learned discourse about brain fever, paralysis of the optic nerve, and other technical phrases, but hope had died hard, and not until today had he accepted his fate as final, acknowledging that man, with all his science, could do no more. By a miracle, only, could his sight be restored.

The news had, in a measure, stunned him. To be sure, he vaguely comprehended that he would be obliged to adjust all his life-mechanism to this strange and terrible condition of affairs. But tonight he was not thinking of the ordinary details of existence which he must now learn to master in the slow, helpless way of the blind. It was the deep agony of blasted love, of dying hope, with which he wrestled as with a mortal foe, praying and

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struggling alone in his despair, calling upon his Maker for strength to complete the last great act of renunciation.

"Constance, Constance!" he groaned, "why are you so faithful? It would be easier, — far easier — if you would scorn me now, worthless creature that I am," — and yet, in his inmost heart, there was a gleam of comfort in the knowledge that of her own free will the woman he loved would never give him up.

For him love had bloomed with such rare and matchless beauty that all the earth had been bright with its dazzling glory. Before Constance came into his life he had never cared much for women, and now, in this hour of crushing tragedy, his frantic, over-wrought mind sought vainly for a solution of the great mystery of love. Why should the world be transformed into a Paradise because of a woman's smile, and as suddenly changed to a dreary Purgatory when the hand of Fate drops the black curtain of separation, forever severing two faithful hearts!

The fearful chaos which reigned in his mind obliterated, for the time being, all sense of his surroundings. Time had no value. A distant bell solemnly counted the hour of ten; he heard, but heeded not. Moments came when he was almost mastered by the temptation to accept the sacrifice so freely offered, to clasp in his the tender hand that would lead him with loving patience over the rayless fields of life. Then again he despised himself for harboring such a thought. Never — never would he be guilty of such selfishness — and, even as he pondered, again the lingering notes of the bell tolled off another hour that had passed into eternity.

One by one the moments glided by, but with their passing there came a change in David's mental condition. Gradually a wondrous sense of exultation crept over his troubled mind, as if the over-ruling Power had whispered words of peace and strength. The mantle of doubt and hesitation fell away from him, and he was clothed in the shining robe of righteous resolution. It would be drinking to the dregs the bitterest draught of life, but he was ready now to drain the cup — alone.

As he rose from his chair — a conquerer — the deep-voiced guardian of the night proclaimed, in stately measure, the mystic hour of twelve.

For the first time David was conscious of the death-like silence that reigned about him. The servants' rooms were in another part of the house and, even if any of them were still moving about, the noise could not penetrate to the study. His mother and sister had retired to their rooms hours before. They had begged to sit with him, thinking, in the depths of their loving hearts, that they might be of some comfort to their "boy" on this terrible evening when he walked with despair, but in the extremity of his anguish he had longed for solitude, to fight his battle out to the bitter end with no eye to witness his sufferings. He had even dismissed his own attendant, Logan, saying that he would waken him if necessary. The faithful fellow had gone away, reluctantly, to his bedroom, a small apartment which opened into David's dressing room, and peace had reigned supreme, except in that one troubled heart, facing the bitterness of death.

Now, as the deep notes of the great bell swung through the silent night, a great longing fell upon him for the sound of a human voice, and he groped his way slowly to the door. His rooms were directly opposite to the study, and he thought that there could be no danger in crossing the corridor, although the stairs leading down to the entrance hall were not far away.

Softly he closed the study door and then paused, with hands outstretched, unsteadily. He was weak from long fasting, having eaten nothing since noon, and the darkness oppressed him with a sense of suffocation, causing his head to whirl. A moment he stood thus, and then, as he was about to advance a step or two, a disagreeable thrill shot through him with the force of an electric shock, nailing him to the floor.

The intense silence had not been broken by any perceptible sound, and yet David knew, by the voice of that subtle, mysterious sense which never lies, that his solitude was broken by an alien presence — that danger crouched beside him.

His courage rose instantly to meet the emergency. A quick challenge sprang to his lips, but common sense silenced it before the rash words were spoken. Naturally daring and impulsive, David now found it difficult to restrain himself; every fibre of his being cried out in anger and despair at his awful helplessness.

But his mind was as clear as glass, and he reasoned with lightning-like rapidity.

If a burglar had obtained entrance, he must be a fellow of stout nerve, willing to take desperate chances. It was an undeviating custom of the house to have an electric light burning all night in the reception hall, and also in the long upper corridor where David now stood. By a clever mechanical device this was secured in such a manner that it was impossible for strangers to turn it off. Therefore David knew that the intruder would realize the great danger that he was facing in making his way through a lighted house where, at any moment, some one might chance to see him, without being seen.

The blind man jumped to the conclusion that the burglar — if such his midnight visitor proved to be — had been obliged to run this risk. There was a window at the end of the corridor, which one might reach from the porch below, and it would, of course, be necessary to traverse the lighted hall, in order to reach the bedrooms, and the dining-room on the lower floor, where a thief would naturally expect to find the silver.

Probably it did not take more than half a minute for all this to pass through David's mind, and with it the further assumption that the burglar would instantly perceive the condition of the man who had thus suddenly crossed his path, and, thinking himself undiscovered, would allow the unconscious enemy to pass on in peace, rather than precipitate disturbance.

Consequently, David thought it might be possible for him to gain his own room, arouse Logan, and summon the police by telephone before the burglar would know that he was trapped.

He leaned heavily back against the door, with one hand pressed to his head, as if his hesitation were caused by weakness, then with outstretched arms advanced slowly, with faltering steps, in the direction of his dressing-room door.

But, seemingly, Fate was against him. He was still weak and nervous from his long illness, and the fearful strain of the past day, and now the strong excitement which possessed him proved to be the last straw. A deathly faintness crept over his senses and he staggered heavily from side to side. With all his pitiful remnant of strength he strove to regain his balance, but it was

in vain. He felt himself falling — falling, and with a last desperate effort threw out his hands, seizing in a vise-like grip the object with which they came in contact.

He vaguely comprehended, as in a half-waking state, that a human being was in his grasp, heard, as from a distance, the sound of an angry oath, and then down the long flight of stairs they went together, bumping, rolling, crashing, until David felt a sudden, sharp, agonizing blow on the side of his head, and then — a moment of oblivion.

It was not a cheerful tableau which was revealed by the softly shaded light, although the lofty hall, with its beautiful furnishings, made an artistic background, but the attitudes of the two men who lay there in a heap against the heavy oaken hall settee were terribly suggestive of death.

David Graham was the first to recover consciousness, and he took advantage of it to grasp the intruder firmly by the throat. As he slowly raised himself to a sitting posture upon the prostrate body, a fog seemed to lift from his dazed intelligence, and then —

God ! Could it be true? He found himself gazing into the burglar's blinking little ferret eyes, and noting that the burglar's hair was red !

Had the days of miracles returned? Could he really see? He caught a deep breath and gasped:

" Who are you? — what are you doing here? — where did you come from? "

" Dey calls me Reddy Dugan — but me real name's Jerry — an' I comes from Heaven ! Dat's over beyond de flats, yer know! I hain't swiped a t'ing — honest to God, I hain't ! I t'ought youse lamps wuz out ! "

" No," — said David, pulling himself and the man to their feet, and gazing about — " the lamps are working all right ! "

" Yer eyes, I meant, boss — I t'ought youse wuz blind."

" You're right," answered David Graham, " I was, but now, thank God, I can see as well as ever ! "

The slam of a closing door came to their ears from above.

" Hush ! Go ! " whispered David, urging the burglar toward the outer door — " Out — and make no noise. I won't tell of

your visit!" — and he pushed Jerry Dugan out into the darkness.

"Oh, Mr. Graham, I thought I heard someone fall downstairs!" exclaimed Logan, coming into view. "Why — I — are you looking at me, Mr. Graham — can you see?"

"Yes, Logan, but don't rouse the house. The good news will keep till morning."

But in the silence of his room again, he whispered, passionately:

"O Constance! God has been very good tonight — though he chose as His instrument a burglar from Heaven!"

Zinklefoot's Find.*

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER.

ORE than ten thousand men, whose lives lost their savor through the attainment of something which they had pursued for years, have pointed out that the joy of pursuit is a thousand times greater than that of possession. Preacher Zinklefoot recognized this when a black head rose from the mosaic of white faces in response to his call of "Henry Hutton." Zinklefoot suddenly discovered that he didn't want Hutton — he only wanted to look for him.

His hunt for Hutton had commenced in a peculiar manner. Five years before, while addressing a revivalist meeting at Decatur, Tennessee, a white-haired woman had asked the preacher to call the name of her wandering son at every meeting he addressed. Zinklefoot promised. Quite unconsciously the woman had provided him with a trump act for his oratorical turn.

For the first few weeks after the duty had been put upon him, he told the story in as few words as possible, and called the name of the prodigal in a matter-of-fact way. Then the dramatic possibilities of the incident stirred him. He realized that he had a gem in his repertoire. He put in subtle touches. He braced the story with little pillars of pathos. With vivid oratorical flashes he pictured the waiting mother, and flung upon the minds of his audiences a picture of the storm-tossed prodigal for whose return she waited. It was a unique turn. The telling of the incident and the solemn calling of the name, tore the crust off the little pools of sentiment in the hearts of his male listeners, and threw the women into hysterics. It was a grand climax to his orations. It left the crowds gasping, hoping, praying, and feeling mighty well disposed towards Zinklefoot, the unpaid scout of the white-haired mother of Decatur.

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And after five years of uninterrupted possession of this act that he had adapted and brought to perfection, the preacher saw it suddenly torn away from him, and the nightly kudos lost for ever. No wonder that the uprising of the black head chilled him. A hate for the stranger surged up within him. Instinctively he knew that here was the long lost Hutton, and he also knew that the white-haired mother story was gone for ever.

The black-headed man appeared at Weehawpville. Zinklefoot was winding up a successful meeting, and it was the moment for the "Henry Hutton" act. He advanced to the edge of the platform and waited till the smallest whispers had been choked by the silence.

"Friends," he cried, "some years ago when speaking at Decatur, Tennessee, a white-haired mother asked me to call the name of her wandering son at every meeting I addressed. She, poor woman, filled with maternal love — hungry motherly love, stored and gathered through the years, ready to be lavished upon the prodigal, thought that he might be guided to one of my meetings to hear her message. I promised her, and I have kept my promise. Night after night, year after year, over the broad breast of the Union I have called his name, listening, waiting, hoping always to hear the answering voice that will bring joy to the heart of the little white-haired woman in far off Tennessee."

The sound of suppressed sobs came from the audience, and Zinklefoot swept up the dizzy heights of oratory that he had built up before reaching the climax. The mother at Decatur shone out like a snowy-headed angel, and tears dropped upon the green grass as he thrilled his hearers with the story of her love and devotion. At last he straightened himself and called the name of the prodigal.

"Henry Hutton!" The call went ringing through the night, and the listeners held their breath. "Henry Hutton! Henry —"

Zinklefoot's voice seemed to fall into a bottomless chasm as a black head rose in the centre of the crowd. The head had the same effect upon him as a blow from a clenched fist, and he staggered.

"I'm Henry Hutton of Decatur," said the man standing.

Weehawpville will not forget the scene that followed. The discovery of the prodigal was intensely dramatic, and as the inhabitants of the town had few opportunities for letting themselves go, they seized upon the one made by Zinklefoot. Men struggled to get near the wanderer; women wept hysterically. Hutton was carried shoulder high to the platform, and the preacher's commands for silence were lost in cheers and sobs. Women sobbed, men sobbed, and the prodigal sobbed. Only Zinklefoot was calm, but Zinklefoot's endeavors to calm the others were unheeded. He had stirred a monster tidal wave of sentiment that billowed around Hutton and left Zinklefoot stranded on the cold stones of neglect. Instead of being the leading actor he dropped back into the shade and stood there without a part.

The genius who always discovers the psychological moment, discovered it at that instant in the interest of Henry Hutton. He may have been a friend of the prodigal, for Weehawpville was unsuccessful in locating him amongst its citizens on the following day, but over the tumult the genius announced that the wanderer would go back to the white-haired mother in Decatur at once if he had his transportation.

Weehawpville shouted the information, and then proceeded to demolish the little barrier that stood between the reunion of the white-haired mother and the long lost son. Weehawpville was in a generous mood. Weehawpville had been tapped on its deepest vein of sentiment, and with cheers and sobs they proved that the ore was good. When silence was at last restored, the wanderer was stammering his thanks for the eighty-three dollars that had been stuffed into the pockets of his ragged clothes. Then Weehawpville sobbed again, and after carrying the stranger to a hotel, the inhabitants went home, still sobbing as their imaginations pictured the meeting in far off Tennessee.

. . . . . .

At daybreak next morning Preacher Zinklefoot startled the lodgers at the hotel by banging heavily at the front entrance, and when the annoyed landlord admitted him, he yelled loudly for the prodigal.

"Left by the three o'clock mail," snapped the proprietor. "Real anxious to see his old woman again."